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Comments on The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology

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 13 hours ago	The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology	Al Giordano	The “Prima-General”	No Tags	91	Unpublished

Comment	Date	Actions
<div> Stan</div> <div>9) The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself. four words: A more perfect union</div> <div>From The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology, 2008/06/11 at 8:17 AM</div>	2008/06/11	Unapprove Spam Delete
<div> Al Giordano</div> <div>Stan – Interesting. Could you elaborate on what you mean by that?</div> <div>From The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology, 2008/06/11 at 8:23 AM</div>	2008/06/11	Unapprove Spam Delete
<div> Benjermin</div> <div>6) A good tactic is one that your people enjoy</div> <div>Whereas resorting to strong negatives against Clinton would have made sense according to the old rules, Obama stood fast to his image of the down to Earth guy trying his damndest to bring sense into the system. Idealism is nothing new, but playing it as though it was working, even early when it wasn't necessarily, fueled the enthusiasm of the Obama fans</div>	2008/06/11	Unapprove Spam Delete

in a way that other insurgent candidates never could. People made fun of Obamaniacs for “drinking the kool-aid” but their legitimate enthusiasm was what pulled this off, and it wouldn’t have happened if Obama hadn’t made it seem like he was really really going to pull this off. Also, if I were the type to break rules, I would say that ridicule is man’s most powerful weapon works as well because being straightforward and sensible made the standard, hollywood tactics of Clinton like “Shame on you Barack Obama” and tearing up at key moments made Obama look like the only sane person in the room. However, you said only one, and I would never dream of doing otherwise.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 8:31 AM



caligirl

2008/06/11

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i think the perfect union speech is better suited to premise #12. but what do i know...?
#7: a tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag... sort of related to #12 in that the tactic of labelling obama as un-american and un-patriotic via his associations and decision re. lapel pin clearly dragged on far too long and became “a drag” (as was evidenced by the backlash to the ABC debate). the fact that folks on either side of the ‘issue’ voiced their disgust at the way the debate was choreographed speaks to how much of an overall drag this was on the country’s collective psyche.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 8:36 AM



WTanner

2008/06/11

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Clinton did her undergraduate thesis on Alinsky, but from the Establishment side (that is, how to undermine these organizing efforts). She still will not release that thesis to the public, as it would demonstrate her true right-wing perspective.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 8:41 AM



john in illinois

2008/06/11

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#4 Make the enemy live up to his/her own book of rules.

Except in this case it is live down to them.

Due to Obama’s charisma (which should never be underrated in this campaign), money and ground organization, he made the Clinton camp resort to the anything goes set of rules. This is particularly true with SC and afterwards.

Although this did not cause total disaster for Clinton, the backlash did

assist in narrowing the gap in many battleground states.

As an aside, I think what made Obama work and what didn't make Dean work, despite the same initial success based upon the nets, is what I mentioned above, Obama's charisma. Quite honestly, Dean didn't have it. Again this is illustrated by Obama's constant success in narrowing and in some cases wiping out Clinton's major polling advantages when he had the opportunity and decided to make himself more of a known quantity in areas.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 8:44 AM



Toby Higbie

2008/06/11

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By coincidence, or not, I just set down Horwitt's bio of Alinsky "Let Them Call Me Rebel." I think there is a good documentary on Alinsky that Field Hands might like, I think it's Democratic Promise".

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 8:45 AM



Stuart

2008/06/11

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I'm afraid I *am* going to break the rules and do two at once, because they're related.

2) Never go outside the experience of your people. It may result in confusion, fear and retreat.

3) Wherever possible go outside the experience of the enemy. Here you want to cause confusion, fear and retreat.

Obama's base was young, educated, technologically aware activists, as were his campaign staff and volunteers. Clinton's base was older, less educated and less technologically aware, and her campaign staff were "traditional" campaigners used to the campaigns of the nineties.

Thus Obama's online organizing, phonebanking and fundraising were within the comfort zone of his base and his activists, but completely alien to both Clinton's base and to her campaign staff.

(hence, I disagree with Al, somewhat, that the Internet didn't play an important role; sure, it's easy to overstate, but I think part of the difference from Dean's campaign is simply that in four years the percentage of the population that has grown up with internet familiarity is much larger, so Obama had a much larger base of support that was reachable via the Internet than Dean did. In order to reach as many people as Obama did via the internet, Dean would have had to bring far more people *outside* their comfort zone, therefore violating these rules)

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 8:48 AM



jhaygood

2008/06/11

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Okay, this is totally unfair to make us choose, but I am going to show discipline! So I'm going with: "4) Make the enemy live up to his/her own book of rules." This reminds me a bit of the Rovian permutation, "Attack your opponents strengths", as opposed to their weaknesses, because you may find their strengths *are* their weaknesses. In the case of McCain, his image has been defined as strong on national security and straight-talk. Well I have been so pleased to see the Obama campaign go straight for both, breaking with Democratic tradition and never backing down from a

challenge or an opportunity to call attention to McCain's actual weaknesses in those areas. It seems (ironically) that maybe candidates' strengths *are* their weaknesses, since they are the foundation of their support. Like challenging Obama's oratorical skills, or his hopefulness, or the enthusiasm of his supporters. I guess the reality is, it's wise to break down the other candidates' strengths, but you do stand the risk of proving them true...

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 8:51 AM



nepat

2008/06/11

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8) Keep the pressure on, with different tactics and actions and utilize all events of the period for your purpose.

The internet, big rallies, small roundtables, big media, small media, social networking, community organizing, "higher purpose" messaging, inspirational rhetoric, fonts, graphic design, appeals to all age groups, Iraq, the economy, health care, net neutrality, and so on. All of these tactics and "events of the period" throughout the primary campaign created a single constant: the element of surprise was on Obama's side. There was simply no corner of the culture left unaddressed. It was a bit like looking up at the sky on a clear night: no matter where your eyes fall, you see a star. It is very difficult to plot against that.

Obama just had it covered. And filled. This created an indirect force of pressure on its own. The campaign became ubiquitous and self-replicating.

Of course, it all would have been for naught had the candidate himself not symbolized Whitman's idea of "containing multitudes." Black, white, American, Kenyan, mainlander, islander, poor, affluent, western, eastern. He was his own melting pot – making it easier for him to reach into numerous cultural niches without seeming disingenuous.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 8:51 AM



Lisa, New York

2008/06/11

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#6 *A good tactic is one that people enjoy.*

"Yes, We Can."

The dipdive video, the chanting at speeches, the clarity of the simple message.

A good choice of words for talented and motivated "underdog."

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 8:55 AM



Phil in TN

2008/06/11

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13) Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it and polarize it.

The Obama campaign knew from the outset that when the dust cleared, the two left standing would be Barack and Hillary. The repeated elucidation of the variants of the change theme clearly showed this and,

after that, the narrative wrote itself.

The Clinton campaign, particularly early on, was of great help in the personalizing and polarizing part. Their theme of experience was heard largely as a return to the past – to the days of triangulation, the DLC and top-down command.

This was already the antithesis of the core of Obama's support. Embracing the 50-state strategy, the bottom-up organizing and the empowerment of the grassroots. (For a great example, Anne has posted a link at the Vol State Field hands that tells how the Obama volunteers in Chattanooga built a primary campaign literally from nothing. Well worth a read.)

Hillary did a pretty fair job of taking care of the polarizing it all by herself. The litany of personal slights and attacks has been well documented and doesn't bear repeating. With the able assistance of folks like Joan Walsh at Salon and the ranters at places like Hillaryis44.com (right-wing agitators or not), all Obama had to do was stay largely above the fray and keep hammering home the desire to change, move forward and not dwell on the past. Obama kept emphasizing "we"; Hillary made the 1st person singular personal pronoun her fiefdom and the deal was done.

This whole process is now beginning to repeat itself for the GE and, once again, one of the biggest and best allies in getting it done is the opposition candidate.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 8:56 AM



sdh

2008/06/11

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3) *Wherever possible go outside the experience of the enemy. Here you want to cause confusion, fear and retreat.*

This was the Obama campaign's m.o. in a nutshell, at least with regards to A) the electorate, and B) his message.

A) Obama's campaign's strategy from the get-go was to grow the electorate, to appeal to younger voters and to appeal for more voters. Traditionally newer voters and younger voters are not as likely to show up. Obama's campaign sought to turn these 'less-likely' voters into 'more-likely' voters, through engagement and message. This strategy actually worked.

To emphasize how shocking effective this strategy was, after Super Tuesday, the Clinton campaign didn't try to mimic the Obama strategy. Instead the Clinton campaign decided to *focus more intensely* on voters who already were more likely to vote for Senator Clinton (i.e.: to double-down on the tried and true strategy of the past).

B) In terms of message I think the key thing here is foreign policy and Iraq. Obama's message runs counter to Clinton's and Kerry's messages. Clinton

ran on a message of having experience in foreign affairs, of knowing how things work in Washington, of understanding the big picture. Obama's message was, "I don't have foreign policy experience and I don't need it. I bring judgment to the table instead." It was a nontraditional argument that cut the experience argument off at the knees (given Senator Clinton's Iraq War vote).

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 8:56 AM



Kristina

2008/06/11

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Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have...or what they think you don't have as well?

I think this was crucial. Hillary simply underestimated the power of the Obama movement from "day one". By the time she realized what she was up against, it was over.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 8:56 AM



BR

2008/06/11

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11) If you push a negative hard and deep enough it will break through into its counterside.

My understanding of this rule is that what is *perceived* as a negative can be a positive for you if you try hard enough. I see several examples of that in Obama's campaign. Take for example his comments about meeting with foreign leaders we don't like. They were considered negative, yet he pushed hard enough that it broke through. The gas tax is another such example.

(Maybe I'm misinterpreting the rule?)

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 8:57 AM



Steve Andersen

2008/06/11

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5) Ridicule is man's most potent weapon. Obama had to be very careful in the primary in his use of this weapon. Primaries have the added challenge that your enemy needs to be your friend at the end of it all. But in only the first few days of the general election campaign, Obama has started ridiculing John McCain. Just yesterday he said, *"I've said that John McCain is running to serve out a third Bush term. But the truth is when it comes to taxes, that's not being fair to George Bush,"* Expect more effective ridicule this summer. Obama has the understanding and skill to imply it without coming across as negative.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:13 AM



suzy

2008/06/11

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#1.

I think the POWER of the networks being developed and so effectively used by the BHO Campaign was not recognized – because it couldn't be

duplicated! I remember laughing one Sunday morning watching the 'talking heads' when Cokie Roberts bragged that she 'didn't read any blogs.' Not understanding what this new technology was doing, made some wonder "what will they do next?" And of course, the answer, who knows. We'll do what's needed and wanted – there's a sense of being able to react so quickly.

Also, for me, it's the bringing together of ALL people. I can't remember which Democratic Convention it was when Jackson was speaking (I paraphrase) about how many workers went unseen because "they took the early bus."

We can see and hear and support each other to a common purpose. More powerful than I think even we can yet imagine, both over & underestimated by those folks trying to define, stop or 'control' this movement.

Obama's confidence, integrity, openness to change with a strong purpose makes this POWER we have all the more powerful!

YES WE CAN!

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:14 AM



B.Mack

2008/06/11

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I can't believe nobody has mentioned 5, ridicule is the most potent weapon! Some examples: Tuzla, Annie Oakley, McCain's green background, bottled hot water, etc.

Youtube has been extremely helpful in applying this rule during this campaign season.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:19 AM



J-PA

2008/06/11

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5) Ridicule is man's most potent weapon.

I think Mr. O employed this rule perfectly with respect to the gas tax holiday, and got the benefit of a "twofer" as both McClain, then Clinton, could not resist pandering at the lowest level. Obama was correct to ridicule this for what it was, an of course, no sane economist (or congressperson) would endorse such nonsense.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:22 AM



jhaygood

2008/06/11

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Regarding BR's comment on "11) If you push a negative hard and deep enough it will break through into its counterside." I always wondered why Obama supporters would whine and complain about various outlets emphasizing his middle name, Hussein. A) their whining just meant the tactic was effective, and B) the more we let opponents harp on something stupid the more people get to compare the reality of the man against the scare tactic – if people say Hussein enough, it will lose all the power they

are trying to invest in it. So... No Chicken-Little-ing!

But as BR said, maybe we're misinterpreting that rule?

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:29 AM



KD

2008/06/11

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The most powerful aspect of this campaign I think was that Barack answered "Yes we can" to us and we believed him.

However, relating to these rules, I think one important force that Barack knew he had to neutralize early on was Bill Clinton, so as regards to #13 – Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it and polarize it. Barack needed to win big in SC to be viable on Super Tuesday. He also knew he had to neutralize as much as possible the Clinton brand and the Clinton legacy. After Bill's fairytale stuff in NH, Barack gave an interview to the Reno Gazette Journal – this was where he discussed infamous Reagan/Ideas theory. But what he also implied in that interview was that Bill Clinton was not a transformative president, and that flipped Bill out, and he went off the handle in South Carolina, and as a result voters turned on Hillary. Hillary was polarized into running on her husband's legacy, yet voters were reminded of the drama of those years. I think he may do the same thing to John McCain, in a debate or some other venue – attempt to set off the McCain temper.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:30 AM



A.H.

2008/06/11

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No. 3 is interesting to me. Clearly the youth, tremendous energy and self-organizing potential of Obama's supporters was the perfect combination to exploit the Internet beautifully in a way that Clinton's supporters still have not fully grasped (and may never understand, simply because the technology will always appear slightly foreign to them). There is a generation gap here. Mandy Grunwald saying disdainfully at the Iowa Caucuses that "it looks like Facebook" illustrates their non-comprehension of the power of the new medium.

Of course, you need a charismatic candidate steeped in community organizing to maximize the indispensable face-to-face personal outreach while the Internet accelerates the networking.

By the way Al, let's not discount too much of FDR's extremely effective use of this revolutionary point to mass communication to keep the American people "on message". It may have helped his *Presidency* more than his *Presidential campaigns*, but that's not really the point. Rush Limbaugh is still hugely effective today, as you correctly point out. The Father Coughlin of this century.

It's just that now the media has diversified – there's a rapidly growing younger population that does NOT form its information universe primarily from Radio or Television, but rather unites its information and social universe through the Internet. This *is* revolutionary, and not well understood by those over 60 years of age.

It's good. Their identity politics can die with them, while the younger generation unfettered by "politically correct"

discourse spontaneously builds bridges which unify rather than divide. It's an organic phenomenon.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:32 AM



ClaudeB

2008/06/11

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7) A tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag.
Obama experienced this problem in the two weeks prior to the Ohio and Texas primaries. His "sports arena strategy" worked well for him in the leadup to Super Tuesday and in his victorious streak in February but it fell flat after Hillary reorganized and began to throw the kitchen sink. This is something BO is aware of and which he admitted after March 4th.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:35 AM



Al Giordano

2008/06/11

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BR – In fact the "meeting with world leaders" flap is a perfect example of pushing a negative hard and deep enough to its counterside, which is basic not just to politics, but also to martial arts.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:36 AM



Brendan

2008/06/11

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First of all, excellent, practical-minded post, Al. The crowd of gawkers and squawkers has yet to say much that is smart, let alone accurate, about why and how Obama has been successful. Your comment pressures the soft spot the media ignores: the human dimension. I firmly believe that after Dean's brief but powerful moment of organizing activists and voters alike—and after Gore's more big-budget organizing around An Inconvenient Truth and LiveEarth (we ignore those massive successes at OUR peril)—Obama and his team had the notion that something could truly be sparked with the right combination of forcings. Gore's early 2007 suggestion that a paradigm shift was around the corner may be very prescient after all. But I do not believe for an instant that there was a master plan (like the internal polling memo) that mapped the future of a movement. As a result, I have always used the metaphor of the Obama campaign as a surfer entering the wave at just the right time and then moving WITH the wave, staying just a little out in front and using its energy in a push forward. Finally, the surfing metaphor works for me because Obama is quintessentially an athlete—something neither Hillary nor Bill nor McCain are or have been. As a result, he gets the human dimension implicitly (hence the emphasis in the IN video clip on the organizational structure he has enabled) and simultaneously knows that the Wave or the Game (in a positive sense) is far larger than one superior practitioner. Timing coupled with a killer instinct to close on the opponent when they are down coupled with sincere and genuine respect FOR the opponent as opponent (not enemy) makes me focus on Rule #5: Ridicule is man's most potent weapon. Ridicule in the polite company of "good liberals" is unbecoming; it smacks of the street, it is seen as low-brow, not data-conscious, it is too personal (note the shrill hand-wringing about Kos's criticism of McCain's brown teeth), too messy, too uncontrollable, too easily turned back on its deployer. But Obama has used ridicule masterfully. The "Vote Different" 1984 ad released about a

year ago (and of rather indeterminate provenance) literally obliterated Clinton's theme of "the conversation." This was the most hard-hitting (and truthful) attack ad of the cycle and established the Obama shop as extremely tough when they chose to be. [The ad merits reviewing, it is so good: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6h3G-IMZxjo>] And I don't believe for a moment that the Obama campaign was not involved with it somehow. The ad brilliantly ridicules Clinton's "inevitability," "conversation," "gender-identity" [a white woman liberates the masses from Big Sister], and "accessibility" themes. I will take one more controversial but exceedingly well-played (and heavily replayed) example: the "you're likable enough, Hillary" comment. [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3DeCLPwxXI>] Both candidates tried to take a stupid and annoying question and use it to their advantage. Clinton mocked it by playing with gender stereotypes. This might have been an effective ploy if she had been more consistent in the build-up to the NH primary with speaking as a feminist and confronting directly gendered stereotypes. But, she was incoherent because she simultaneously wanted to confront those stereotypes AND use them to her advantage. This 1990's triangulating didn't work; it seemed lame and emphasized the "say anything" theme. Obama's quip, which to my ears is one of the truest sounding notes from his debate performances, was brilliant. Yes, it was hard-hitting-precisely attacking the opponent when she was vulnerable and where she was vulnerable. It also skirted the edge of "arrogance" rather artfully. It was a supremely confident statement uttered in a retrospective and offhand way. The quip ridiculed the inanity of the question and could be heard as a tacit support of Clinton against the clearly sexist tone of the media stories that prompted it. The line mocked the whole framing of the pundit-interrogators AND Clinton's own discomfort with sincerely talking as a feminist. It was also true. Remarkably, it made Obama look like the feminist even as he was essentially attacking Clinton. "Likable Enough" might be the Hillary for President campaign epitaph. So, even as "good liberals" get all nervy when real liberals use ridicule in the service of tough campaigns, I praise the Obama campaign for deftly (and sparingly-that is also the key) using ridicule (call it "sharp elbows") to erode his opponent's perceived strengths.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:36 AM



Stan

2008/06/11

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Al, when I was a little kid I'd always try to push my finger real hard against the faucet to keep the water from coming out. Didn't ever work. Water is amazing, it can even grind down mountains. Each little particle gets to make its own way along the rock, but gravity averages out the individual movements into a force of nature. I couldn't plug that faucet, and the powers that be couldn't keep Obama off the top of the ticket. When a movement has gravity on its side each person can truly act on their own and bring the full range of their individual talents and experiences to bear. Obama says it best: "I'm a big believer that the way great things happen is when people are willing to submerge their own egos and focus on bringing their particular gifts and and passions energy and vision to a common task then great things can be accomplished." They'll never be able to press their thumbs hard enough against the faucet, so they have to go after gravity. They do this the same way they always have: rumors, slurs, defamation, dehumanizing. Martin Luther King was a communist, he plagerized, he was a radical, he

was an adulterer,... the list goes on.

Barack Obama went to a radical Madrassa, he is a muslim, he was sworn in on the Koran, he won't say the pledge of allegiance, his wife wrote an radical thesis, his wife isn't proud of her country, there is a secret video tape where his wife says a racial slur,... and on and on.

The thing that a lot of people don't get is that Martin Luther King wasn't the gravity of the civil rights movement, Justice was. Barack Obama isn't the gravity of this movement we've joined, change is. They can't beat us if we're working together, focused on the biggest ideas that there are. They need us to be thinking about little things. There is no "thing" that can keep us from moving forward, but the "threat" makes us forget our way.

So we need to confront our "things" as they come up, forget about "threats" and try not to worry too much about all the people in the rear view mirror coughing on our dust.

This is exactly what Obama did with "A more perfect Union", he did the best he could personally to deal with it and then he brushed the dirt right off his shoulder and kept going.

We need to do the same, that's why I am fully up on my chicken little shots. Time to go call my uncle who thinks "there is something just not right about that Obama" and get to work.

Ops, I got a little wordy there... happens sometimes when I hit the coffee too hard.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:36 AM



drbonzo

2008/06/11

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I'll take slight exception to Al's point re: others' over-emphasizing the role of the technology in Obama's success.

You're correct, Al, that the Internet doesn't *explain* and didn't *cause* Obama's success in the primary, any more than (as you point out) radio *created* or *explains* FDR's rise and the New Deal. But there's also no question that in both cases we're talking about a new technology that allowed a talented, charismatic politician to create and exploit new communication and organizational techniques. You might still have had the New Deal without the Fireside Chats, but you certainly wouldn't have had the Chats without the rise and widespread adoption of the new radio technology.

That nit having been picked, however, I'm right on board with Stuart @8:48 in naming the two "outside the experience" rules as crucial in the way that Web technology has played a role in this campaign.

What I observe as a 40-something web geek is that there's a crucial difference between the 30 - 50 y.o. demographic and the (roughly) under-24 set. That difference *isn't* that us geezers don't or can't use the Web while the youngsters can and do — fact is, there's plenty of folks of all ages who practically live on the Web. The difference is that the geezers (like me) are people for whom the Web is a learned skill, an acquired taste if you will. Whereas the younger crew came up without ever knowing a world in which the Internet *wasn't* part of the fabric of day-to-day life. What I think Obama has done has been to leverage that distinction. He has consciously and carefully appealed — especially when it comes to recruiting on-the-ground talent — to the demographic for whom the Web is just the Way Things Get Done, and he's made sure that his campaign organization provides and utilizes those tools in a way that operates within their zone of comfort and experience. Hillary couldn't (and McCain won't be able to) do the same largely by virtue of the fact that her appeal is weighted more to geezers like me. Like I say, it isn't that we can't or don't use the Web, it's just that the Web is something "new" to us,

something that, at some point, we had to *get* comfortable with.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:37 AM



Brendan

2008/06/11

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Sorry, I don't know what happened to my paragraph breaks. Any suggestions?

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:37 AM



Patrick

2008/06/11

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1) Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have.

Anyone watching the GOP strategists scrambling around like chickens with their heads cut off should be sufficient evidence of this point's truth. They seem unable to rally their base behind McCain, and they see the coming Obama juggernaut as an onslaught that can't be stopped.

Literally, to them, a battle of epic proportions.

The flip side of recognizing this is, it makes it easy to get comfortable and expect a victory. If there's anything we have to remember, it's to not stop or slow down until AFTER we've crossed the finish line. Only then can we celebrate and maybe look back for a split second to enjoy what we've done.. and then push on further still because Obama's campaign is about far, far more than putting a man in office.. it's about Americans, all Americans, taking back the reigns of their government and making the world in which they want to live.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:38 AM



Ted

2008/06/11

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A good plan has strict fundamentals in place but stays out of the detail so that anyone can work within it with little guidance. This space allows for people to use their creativity that will take you much farther than even the most brilliant of detailed plans would allow.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:43 AM



Woodrow "asim" Jarvis Hill

2008/06/11

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The major premise for tactics is the development of operations that will maintain a constant pressure upon the opposition.

This goes to your premise that Searles et. al. don't get it. They do, to the extent that a National Community Organizing project — which is a large part of the Obama campaign — is only workable with the current Internet. I'm not certain that, if the technology was 4 years back, it would have worked.

You needed to have not just email, but the kind of Social Networking where complex, multi-media communications were not only easy, but well

known to the potential volunteers (see #2), and where it was already seen by those self-same volunteers as a joy and a pleasure to use (see #6). That massive reduction in the friction to go from supporter to volunteer, and the ability for people to be influenced by the well-known Internet word of mouth (see memes), is absolutely critical to how Obama built his framework for winning the nomination.

Searles' most famous work, *The Cluetrain Manifesto*, nails the key of Organizing in its very first entry, when it says that "Markets are Conversations". The Conversational mode this campaign engages in makes "employees" feel part of it, like they we have a stake in it. And although it's clearly possible outside of the 'net, it's nearly impossible to organize on a National basis without the Internet, esp. in the quickly-growing insurgent fashion that propelled Obama. A great contrast is with how long it took MLK to build anything like a regional Civil Rights structure, and his struggles with porting it to Chicago.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:47 AM



Patrick

2008/06/11

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13) Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it and polarize it.

Obama's message never changed from the day he announced his candidacy. His target was an America that had increasingly become about divorcing Americans from the political process, a point that would be particularly apparent to a community organizer, whose work is about GETTING people involved.

Freeze it, polarize it – not a single speech did Obama make in which he didn't harp on the power in Washington belonging to the powerful few and not to Americans all over the country. He's made alot of enemies among those who are part of that power structure, no less the lobbyists about whom he has constantly beaten the drum.

Personalize it – OUR America. 'Nuff said.

And more generally...

I think a great deal of what Obama has done has nothing to do with technology, or message. It has to do with approach. Obama is, at the moment, the rejuvenation of political spirit in America. Politics over the past 20 years became a joke, a zero-sum game played only by those who really (apparently) had nothing better to do with their time. It's hard to believe in a system when all progress grinds to a screeching halt because of so much animosity and infighting, so much division and hatred on both sides.

Obama's appeal, to everyone I've talked to, has been not that he's a politician with some great ideas – but that he's a leader who knows how to implement them. He's a man who knows how to force us to realize that we matter. That message has been a long, long time in coming.

It required a critical mass for people to react to that message, though – a critical mass of corruption, greed, destruction, and pain, and a critical mass of purpose and people to make it seem worthwhile. Dean's 2004 campaign couldn't capitalize on the sentiment yet because it hadn't reached critical mass; but his campaign did lay the groundwork for that

mass being reached in 2008.

Comes the Inquisitor

Obama's campaign, while monumental, did not execute this task alone – it is built on the history of those who came before, who set the stage (both good AND bad) to make the American people ready to hear what he had to say. He was the right man – in the right place – at the right time – and doing what he is doing for the right reasons.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:48 AM



Ann

2008/06/11

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"The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself"

I keep thinking about the Chicken Little stuff, obsessive worry about what could go wrong. Obama seemed above that to the extent that he didn't even worry much about the last few primaries, focusing ahead on the GE. He seems to have a clear, unafraid strategy now, that seems to include gathering people for posts in his administration and sure feels like leadership.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:48 AM



Al Giordano

2008/06/11

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Brendan – From what I've been told, the paragraph breaks disappear and those annoying diagonals appear when the commenter clicks "submit" before typing in the anti-spam code, or if the commenter types the anti-spam code incorrectly on the first try.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:52 AM



Patrick

2008/06/11

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Oh – to any who might recognize the "Comes the Inquisitor" reference above, it is from Babylon 5.

And a character, named Sebastian, comes to judge the characters to determine if they are the right people, in the right time, to carry out the task ahead, for the right reasons.

And he was Jack the Ripper, preserved for centuries, waiting to judge as penance for his unspeakable acts. I didn't mean to make that connection, but hey, Jack the Ripper seems to be a useful theme in this discussion..... ?

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:52 AM



Jason B

2008/06/11

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I'm not that experienced with politics, but to be honest, it seems like not

only was the internet huge in this, but it was the maturation of the internet that allowed this to come to pass. Youtube was created in 2005, post '04 election so that kind of tech wasn't available when Dean was running. It wasn't possible for supporters to feel quite so connected to their candidates. We had Myspace, but even that was pretty low-key.

I heard a comparison about the internet that helped it make a lot of sense to me. They said that the internet was like indoor plumbing – when it was first invented, it was sort of a geeky thing that was only good for specific things. Indoor plumbing was a novelty in and of itself, so people made use of it but they were always drawn to what it was more than what it could do.

The internet was very similar, that even in '04, the internet was “the internet,” so you had to do specific things, you had to know what you were looking for, and people tended to keep their distance. Like plumbing, it was still an oddity. By '08, however, social networking became the lifestyle that made the internet acceptable. It was no longer about the internet, but what you could do with it. People who log in to Facebook aren't really “using the internet,” they're using Facebook. Those sorts of applications made the internet part of everybody's life, but in a way that merged the applications with the delivery system.

People don't give credit to Edwards and Obama holding the debate with social networking sites early on in the primary, but that was a forward-thinking strategy that Obama really made great use out of later. People have found ways to tap in to each other using social networking instead of using the internet, and that was a huge technological push in Obama's favour.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:54 AM



Al Giordano

2008/06/11

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Ann – Good point about Chicken Littles: Let's not forget that Senator Clinton did her college thesis on Alinsky's work and her campaign was, at moments, very effective at its efforts to “cause confusion, fear and retreat.” Of course, in some corners, we were effective at disarming that tactic.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 9:54 AM



Lisa, New York

2008/06/11

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#12: ***The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative.***

Obama's speech on race in response to Rev. Wright attacks and Al's point about this issue enabling Obama to emphasize that he was Christian not muslim, comes to mind with relation to #12

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:02 AM



Nick

2008/06/11

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8) *Keep the pressure on, with different tactics and actions and utilize all events of the period for your purpose.*

This could apply to the Obama campaign's strategy to compete everywhere, to win delegates in every state regardless of selection method, and to roll out superdelegate endorsements at critical times. No matter what happened, they managed to keep the delegate count growing, to build and maintain an insurmountable lead.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:04 AM



Anne in IL

2008/06/11

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Since it doesn't look like anyone's mentioned this yet, I will:

10) The major premise for tactics is the development of operations that will maintain a constant pressure upon the opposition.

Obama had the money and organization to push advertising and GOTV efforts in the vast majority of states, thus draining the Clinton organization in their efforts to keep up.

The main example of this would be Pennsylvania. Even though Clinton won, Obama made her spend more in effort, money and time to get relatively less (in terms of delegates) than she would have liked.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:04 AM



Trinity

2008/06/11

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12) The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative.

This is something that I appreciate most about Obama. He doesn't just say that McCain is wrong on an issue he also says exactly why and then immediately presents his alternative. It is precisely the tactic he has been using on his current "Economic Tour". Also – it is a great way to remain focused on the issues and move away from Rovian style identity politics.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:08 AM



Nick

2008/06/11

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AI–
I agree the Obama campaign's success is grounded in his organizational approach. But it all would have been for naught if he weren't a gifted politician with a message whose 'time has come'. That Obama has the leadership and organizational skills as well is the miracle of his candidacy, IMHO.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:11 AM



The Right Reverend T

2008/06/11

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The Right Reverend T


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The most powerful for me falls into: 12) The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative

Do you remember when Bush laid into Obama, thinly decrying him from the pulpit of the Knesset for advocating “appeasement” with dictators? And then when McCain joined in with the choreographed tag-teaming? This was in some ways a successful attack, they spuriously linked Obama’s policy of “conversation before conflagration” to Adolf Hitler and the Holocaust. From Tel-Aviv of all places.

However, Obama’s response was to call Bush-McCain’s bluff on their weakest hand. And it was credible and explosive, the deliciousness in his own words:

“They aren’t telling you the truth. They are trying to fool you and scare you because they can’t win a foreign policy debate on the merits. But it’s not going to work. Not this time, not this year.”

“I want to be perfectly clear with George and John McCain....If George Bush and John McCain want to have a debate about protecting the United States of America, that is a debate I’m willing to have anytime, anywhere because that is a debate that I will win because George Bush and John McCain have a lot to answer for.”

Bang. Obama was able to tell the nation a truth which resonated. They lied. They are responsible for the deaths America has suffered.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:13 AM



Al Giordano

2008/06/11

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Congratulations to Field Hands Local #12: Wisconsin!

(More Field Hand news added in the updates.)

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:15 AM



Redshift

2008/06/11

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Looks like no one has chose #10 yet:

“10) The major premise for tactics is the development of operations that will maintain a constant pressure upon the opposition.”

The willingness to trust volunteers to act, while providing guidance and not just leaving them to flail on their own, was a major component of being able to maintain pressure everywhere at once. Here in VA, because our primary was a week after Super Tuesday, we saw no campaign staff until less than two weeks out. But the volunteer effort which had been building since last summer was massive and well-organized. One of the things the Obama campaign did better than any I have ever seen was to smoothly integrate with that ongoing effort, to direct it and focus it, but not step on the people who’d done so much work on their own. (There were some fights behind the scenes, I’ve heard, but in keeping with “no drama,” nobody other than the top level people who were involved heard about them until afterwards.)

And as a veteran of the Dean campaign, I would like to concur with Jason

B — the existence of the Internet isn't what made this possible; the Internet is just a platform; it's the tools built on it that are important. In 2004, we stumbled upon a few things like Meetup and Internet fundraising to catapult a small-state governor to a frontrunner, but a lot of what the Obama campaign has used has been built or discovered since 2004. You have to build propeller planes before you can invent jets. The Obama campaign has taken things we were making up as we went along (and more that didn't exist then) and assembled and built on them brilliantly.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:20 AM



Kristina

2008/06/11

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OMG, here's the quote of the day from McCain. The CONSTITUTION? Does he really wanna go THERE? Obama never said a thing about the Constitution, he said guns. Now McCain wants to try and play it like that? Beautiful...See rules 11 and 12 above...This is just TOOOOOOOOOOOO easy!

"We're going to go to the small towns in Pennsylvania and I'm gonna to tell them I don't agree with Senator Obama that they cling to their religion and the Constitution because they're bitter."

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:23 AM



Phoenix Woman

2008/06/11

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Al, I am quite positive that, after years of watching from the Great Beyond as people like Ralph Reed perfected his single-issue political tactics on behalf of the Cons, Saul is happy to see that someone who was trained by Alinsky's own prize pupils is using Alinsky's rules to help out the good folks for a change.

With that in mind, I'd have to say that #2, #3, #6 and above all #8 are the biggies, with #10 and #11 not far behind.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:25 AM



Tara Hussein

2008/06/11

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I really like
11) If you push a negative hard and deep enough it will break through into its counterside.

I didn't get it at first but after seeing some other's examples I do. I think the More Perfect Union speech fits here too. The issue of Wright and all that race baggage is something that he very effectively turned around to a positive. He is willing to take things head on – even the negatives and work with them.

Another example is the bitter comment. He turned that around by getting people to talk about these issues in ways they haven't before. And he

displayed humility when admitting he hadn't used the best of words initially.

Now some may still hold these things against him but I think many admire him more. If we're lucky, people are ready to accept a little humility from their leaders rather than hubris.

Really fantastic post, Al. I feel like I'm back in school. I'll be ruminating on this some more.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:26 AM



Kristina

2008/06/11

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I meant to include this link to the video and his quote should have been in the middle of my comments, sorry was in a hurry.

<http://thepage.time.com/video-mccain-invokes-bitter-in-pennsylvania/>

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:26 AM



palo

2008/06/11

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al 7) A tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag. I was impressed with obamas speech in no. Carolina this week, full of specific policy proposals with the "I have dream" rhetoric tamped down.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:30 AM



Jeff

2008/06/11

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#11, and I'll analyze this with regard to racism. This is going to be a long post, and as opposed to journalism, the important stuff comes LATER, as that which arguments make possible. Don't accuse me of burying the lede.

Saul doesn't always formulate his principles with precision. In this case the important point is just that there is a "counterside" (very interesting coinage!) to a negative value.

I live in Kentucky, and I have suffered a lot from watching my home state be identified as the most racist in the country because 20% of the people told exit pollsters that race was a factor in their vote.

Some people did manage to get some explanation of this into blog posts. Kentucky is unlike, say, Mississippi. The latter, along with other Cotton South states, has always had a VERY HIGH black population. SO white people might not "cotton to" black people and their culture...but they definitely know them, know them well, and vice versa. (This is the same in Israel and Palestine, where Hamas and the IDF know each other by name, address and family ties. It makes for a damn dirty war, but because the two populations are literally related, the possibility of peace is never extinguished...while I'm at it, let me say that no less a thinker than Claude Levi-Strauss remarked late in life that you should never expect members of any cultural group to give up PREFERRING their own kind, and it's wrong to identify that behavior with racism.)

Kentucky had a large black population (over 50% in some areas) before the

Civil War...but the mountain areas of KY, WV, and TN have NEVER had large black populations because it was never economically worthwhile to transport slaves there. You're also talking about low population areas, period, in much of Appalachia.

The odd thing is that the "Appalachian" part of KY and WV was never Confederate. After all, that's why West Virginia exists, because 28 counties refused to secede. I wish I could remember who made the fabulously spot-on remark that whites in that area were anti-Southern, anti-war, anti-slavery, AND ANTI-BLACK. They didn't want anything to do with slavery OR WITH SLAVES.

As a historian of Kentucky, I'm in a position to observe that Kentucky's course during the war – officially Unionist with much sympathy for the South in Central and Southern Kentucky – was spectacularly unsuccessful. Kentucky managed to become hated by both sides, so that there is (for example) a tradition of dislike between Kentucky and Tennessee (and the deep South does not see Kentucky as southern). But Kentucky was not gently treated under Reconstruction, so that even the descendants of soldiers from Indiana or Minnesota who had to garrison Kentucky have bad memories about it.

Reconstruction era abuses had something to do with Kentucky's proverbial isolation. What had been a frontier state was passed over during Westward expansion like a boulder in a stream.

Fast forward to the current era. Believe it or not, cell phone towers only penetrated Eastern Kentucky in the last few years (and service is still awful there). Heck, it wasn't that long ago that they hadn't managed to get CABLE TV down into the numerous narrow valleys or "hollers" of E KY and WV.

We should observe that these areas are poor in more ways than one. There is no industrial base. Coal mining booms sustained the population and even brought in wealth during boom times, but when the booms go bust you're left with "survival" populations that send their best and brightest to Lexington, Cincinnati, Detroit (and there are many hillbillies in NYC, don't kid yourself).

Culturally, these populations had a tremendous ability NOT to change (which was a great cultural value up until about the 15th century). Cable TV, when it finally arrived, had an explosive effect on culture in the Mountain South (a better term than "Appalachia", a precise geographical term that is being grossly misused). People in "the backyard of seven states" (some have proposed that it be re-named "Cumberland") found out by watching TV that the culture of the wider USA had changed – without their having been aware.

What they saw, and grasped more fully for having it presented all at once, was that BLACK PEOPLE, a group that was completely marginal to them (and numerically very small), had attained a position of cultural ASCENDANCY in American culture. Suburban teenagers outside the South never considered that they had in some ways "outsourced" their own cultural preferences by becoming rap aficionados. But mountain youth saw right away that ON TELEVISION, white males had come to constitute a subordinate group.

This point can hardly go without opposition, since white actors numerically dominate the media. But I would simply submit that in a four-cornered universe, for quite some time, black males and white females have been ICONICALLY dominant, in advertising and in some areas of the arts – while white males are supposed to shut up and be thankful for their continued economic dominance, and black females just don't appear at all (unless they're Oprah). It isn't even necessary to point to the two most successful Presidential campaigns this year (both Democratic).

At any rate, mountain youth (whom I have taught in college classes) did experience this culture shock in the following way: it became obvious to them that their culture was failing, and failing to compete effectively with

the iconically black-led culture they saw on TV. And so their response has been "competitive" – and mostly ineffectual. But given their history and background, this willingness to stand, as philosophers say, "over against" black culture, is really not racist, although it necessarily appears to be so in the eyes of Northern anti-racists – who did not get the same postponed culture shock, and some of whom live in states where the black population is at its smallest. (I should point out here that the Sentencing Project showed last years that Northern and Upper Midwestern states are far more likely to imprison blacks than Southern states in proportional terms, although the Southern states tend to have much higher prison populations in terms of raw numbers.)

To put this in cruder terms (but it is necessary to do that sometimes): the mountain whites really think that a black President will concentrate on giving black people jobs. The notion that Obama is not even "black enough" would be incomprehensible to them. As mid-20th century literature affirms, the Cotton South has a sort of Big Government tradition because Reconstruction was so intrusive. BUT Reconstruction did not touch the Mountain South – AND THEREFORE they are still locked in a Scots-Irish tradition of DEEP SUSPICION OF GOVERNMENT AS A WHOLE. They think of government as organized theft. Clinton was acceptable to them, because he was, simply, one of them, and would help their "kind" (do we not see here how accurately Mountain Southerners have picked up the fact that the rest of the country tends to "construct" them as tantamount to ANOTHER, and inferior, RACE? You may pull out your Deliverance banjo now). In still other words, it is at least a different kind of racism, when a culture and its population protest against a candidate's race because they already feel themselves to be outclassed and dominated by that race. It is axiomatic among every other white population that to be white is a privilege. But the whites of the Mountain South – you should pardon the expression – know better than that.

Now – now we get to the "counterside". And it is just this. If Mountain southerners have been the most willing of any group to allow themselves to be SEEN as "opposed" to a black candidate as such – it is BECAUSE there is something about their cultural makeup and their relative position in American society that IS LIKE the cultural makeup and position of black people. They are in a sense the most curious about blacks.

In some sense, there is more potential for cultural revolution among blacks and poor whites than in other segments of society. In some ways this is a statement of the revolutionary potential of RURAL POPULATIONS – and we saw THAT in Ancient Rome, in revolutionary Cuba, and in revolutionary France. But it was the rural population who became reactionary, voting for Napoleon III, ending the overt part of the French Revolution.

Revolution is always cultural. The whole "theory" of America is that the "melting pot" not only mitigates sectarianism in society, but also drives cultural COMPETITION, which prevents the kind of stagnation that afflicted Europe. In historical terms, it is much more likely that America has simply shot its bolt. There is far more desire to be, to know, to live, travel, share...among the Chinese. America's culture has become stagnant and decadent, while China is experiencing a "long, long spring" of awakening art, science, and culture – so goes the argument. And there is little in the current productions of American culture to fuel a counter-argument.

It is necessary to look in unexpected places for this cultural ferment. I will give one scenario that involves the people of the Mountain South, and make arguments that call for a new understanding and valuation of RURAL CHARACTER, and call for us to look with fresh eyes at the cultural-racial and economic dynamic in America at this time.

Whatever the nature of anti-black prejudice in Kentucky, anti-Hispanic prejudice is not a spin-off from it. In the 1960s and 1970s, there were hardly any Hispanics at all there. In the 1980s, horse farms started to hire

a few Hispanic stable boys and "hot walkers". Throughout the 1980s and afterward, blacks and whites alike progressively abandoned farm work in Kentucky. This reduced almost to nothing what had been a true "peasant" or sharecropper population, quite large at one time. Hispanics – essentially Mexicans – filled the gap, and since then Kentucky's Hispanic population has grown steadily.

Instead of characterizing it in merely statistical terms, let me do so "culturally" and metaphorically.

At first the Mexicans just lived near the horse farms and race tracks. Or else they were placed in trailers at the very end of country roads, to stay hidden when not working.

Then they got old beat up cars to drive around, and they were allowed to renovate dilapidated houses on or near farms.

Then they started meeting white girls at laundromats. Laugh if you will, but I have seen laundromats on Saturdays where you couldn't move for the crowd of mud-caked little Mexicans and their filthy laundry, and straight-haired white girls and their mud-caked children.

Will I be attacked if I add a few more characteristics? The Mexicans then were all men; very few families came, few women. These men needed more than sex, more than companionship. They needed someone to vouch for them. They needed allies.

Also, I think that like black men, they are less culturally prejudiced against plus-sized girls. However this may be, it is undeniable that Mexican men formed liaisons with white girls who for one reason or another were not well cared for by white men. They were often overweight, and often had children. They occupied the sociological niche people used to accuse black women of occupying; they depended upon their children for eligibility for government assistance, and on not being married.

The alliance between white girls and Mexican men eventually created stable families. Mexican men continued to climb the ladder in agriculture, becoming farm managers and horse trainers, and bringing in still more entry-level workers (now from other countries further south than Mexico). Children of these families – in the last decade we see the achievements of these families – now produce quarterbacks and cheerleaders, and brown people who speak with Southern accents.

Today, the Hispanic population of Kentucky has its own groceries and restaurants, its own newspapers and organizations. This segment of our society has put down roots and is ready to "take off" and grow. And all this has been accomplished without violence, indeed without any very great discomfort on the part of whites.

But it is not a matter of "integration". Rather, the culture of Kentucky has been changed. The "counterside", in our first take, was a true opposite: if these white people are willing to come out in public and virtually SAY they would PREFER that the President not be black – THEN THE OPPOSITE IS ALSO TRUE. They already somehow LOVE black people. But they want a courtship to ensue.

Now the cultural "counterside", in TRUE (not caricatured) Hegelian (and Marxian) fashion, can produce an ECONOMIC "counterside".

That is, Kentucky has 5 million people; but if you populate "Appalachia" and southern and Western Kentucky, it could accommodate 10 million.

Population is power. The elements of a dying culture pretend that "we have enough people here". The WORLD ITSELF belies that view. THE ONLY WAY "WHITE" (AND BLACK!) AMERICA CAN MEET THE CHALLENGE OF CHINESE PRODUCTION CAPACITY IS TO ENTER INTO A FULL ALLIANCE WITH HISPANIC AMERICA. It doesn't make sense for countries in South America to enter into sweetheart energy and industrial deals with China; only a stiff-arm American posture breeds that. What makes sense is a relaunch of PAN-AMERICAN industry, with a gradual redistribution of population according to economic forces already in operation. Let Lou Dobbs' head explode, but if that many people want to get into the US, then the laws of economics will get them in, and no "fence" will stop

them.

In this historic cultural counter-movement to slow down the breakneck over-expansion of Chinese industry, Kentucky has earned, unexpectedly, its cultural spurs. Hispanics LIKE Kentucky. They like its soil and its trees and its air. They even like its people, after a while; and although it seems odd to think of a Kentucky that is more Hispanic than all but a dozen or so states, that is what is on the cards, if economic depression does not undo everything. Sherlock Holmes said to Henry Baskerville: \"Good God, man, only energy can save you now.\" The same could be said of American culture. It is the Hispanic influx that will, nay MUST help us get beyond the sterile opposition of white and black. This Hispanic influx is RURAL in nature; and it is the energy of the periphery that must now re-energize the populations of the center – as America bulks up to 500 million by 2050, with the Hispanic population reaching 25 or even 30 percent. This is the real \"counterside\" of apparently \"racial\" dislike in our country at this time. Analyses that hark back to the KKK or even the Civil War have something to contribute, but not that much. The correct analysis looks forward to an economic configuration in which the technological achievements of white 20th century America are \"filled out\" and driven forward by an economically and culturally harmonized population of ONE BILLION people – big enough to act as counterweight even to the four billion India and China will have.

Cultural harmony will count for a lot in an oil-poor world. We will have to get used to our neighbors, because we will no longer be able to jump back and forth across oceans to avoid them!

The final counterside is this: from simple observations about the behavior of people in rural backwaters, we have risen by degrees to the main line of the political development of the world.

So saying, I'd like to give a shout out to Dee Davis and Appalshop, who first started me thinking like this.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:33 AM



B.Mack

2008/06/11

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Speaking of number 5, ridicule, here's a good piece:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qha3pZTflzY>

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:33 AM



dkw

2008/06/11

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11) If you push a negative hard and deep enough it will break through into its counterside.

Obama and his campaign understand and practice this principle in numerous ways. Most importantly, it seems to me, Obama has been able to take a general and pervasive negative for left/liberal politics in the US in recent decades—the institutionalization of the legal/political principle that money = speech—and turn it into one of his greatest strengths.

I certainly agree with AI that technology is not the cause here. What people mean to point to when talking about the rise of the intertubes/technology/etc. are the emergence of certain practices. And practices don't just happen: they are excited, encouraged, cultivated, and practiced!

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:41 AM



KLS

2008/06/11

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4) Make the enemy live up to his/her own book of rules. We saw this with Obama\'s campaign holding steadfast against Clinton trying to change the rules for Florida/Michigan. Looking forward to seeing how the Obama campaign makes the most of McCains campaign finance issues.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:46 AM



john in illinois

2008/06/11

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Kristina quotes McCain as saying “***We’re going to go to the small towns in Pennsylvania and I’m gonna to tell them I don’t agree with Senator Obama that they cling to their religion and the Constitution because they’re bitter.***”

Taken as spoken he is saying they cling to their religion. So I want to hear what he thinks the reason is for the clinging.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:46 AM



JoAnn

2008/06/11

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Number one applies, in that Clinton’s campaign probably assumed that Obama had damaging secrets in his background that they could ferret out and use to hurt him. No matter how hard they searched and tried to blow up what little they did find, he wasn’t damaged because he was really pretty clean. He and his people knew that going in, so they didn’t have to worry about it. He had written everything in his books and had nothing to hide. This was particularly hard for the Clintons to fathom because of their own checkered past. They even hung on much longer than they should have, spending money they didn’t have, thinking that surely something would come back to bite him, but it never did.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:49 AM



Oona

2008/06/11

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Some of these rules remind me of principles of family therapy. I would say:

8) Keep the pressure on, with different tactics and actions and utilize all events of the period for your purpose. reminds me of the principle of \”intensification,\” cornering something people particularly want to avoid and causing a breakthrough as a result by harping on it in various ways.

Obama\'s ability to stay on message was so different from Hillary, who changed with every poll. He is secure enough in himself to stay on message and this intensity forces the opponent to waffle, change, and

thus reveal themselves to be unsure of their position and appear inconsistent and scared.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:50 AM



Kristina

2008/06/11

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john, did you watch the video link?

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:50 AM



Oona

2008/06/11

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Just watching the Saul Alinsky video above makes me want to add to my comment from a perspective of family therapy extrapolated to community organizing. Because Obama's strength is intensified through his ability not to budge, when we ally with him, we introject his strength (vs. my guess is how Clinton's supporters might have felt, like "where is she going?" and feeling more and more insecure and without leadership

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:54 AM



Midaged

2008/06/11

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5 – Ridicule

On a downtown Knoxville sandwich board: Bush agrees to fight global warming. He is sending 20,000 troops to fight the sun.

BUT, I have a philosophical question. Who is the enemy?

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:57 AM



michael

2008/06/11

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11) If you push a negative hard and deep enough it will break through into its counterside.

Like BR I'm having a lot of trouble making any sense of that sentence. Whose "negatives" are we pushing, ours or the enemies? Are we pushing it forward or pushing back against it? Or are we letting the enemy push it too hard and using that force against them in a political jujitsu sort of way?

Maybe someone has a link where I can read an elaboration on this? It's been interesting to read *Dreams from My Father* in this context — It seems through his practice Barack developed a sort of corollary to #2: Don't assume you know what the "experience of your people" is, and don't underestimate the depth and breadth of their knowledge or capacity. He's fairly critical of his organizer-mentors for their tendency to assume they know what's best and what people's motivations are.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:57

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 10:57 AM

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PalGirl2008

5) Ridicule is man's most potent weapon.

it\'s what John Keryy should have done with the swiftboaters.....utter ridicule.... Obama did it to a great effect ..first with mocking the \\'weakness\' question during one of the debates....then by the dirt on the shoulder move...and many many more

Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it and polarize it.

I don\'t think this was done with a great effect with Hillary, but I think it\'s due to the nature of the primaries.....I suspect it will be more successful with GE mode.

and what a great topic

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 11:02 AM

DairyStateDad

2008/06/11

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Excellent Post, Al.

Here's a cautionary tale about what happens when leaders forget such lessons:

Ron Carey was the first president of the Teamsters union to be democratically elected by the rank and file. The union had been taken over by the government because of its corruption, and one provision the feds put in place was direct election of national officers. Carey, an honest and aggressive local union president, was boosted to the national office by a grass-roots movement based in the rank and file and in the reform activists at Teamsters for a Democratic Union. He won narrowly, then built a loyal base among union members. When Carey ran for re-election at the end of his first term, instead of relying so much on the sort of rank and file organizing that his first campaign did, he turned to some long-time public relations / political consultants. They allegedly engaged in a fund-raising activities that violated federal labor laws and the specifics of the regulations governing the union. Carey's reelection was thrown out and he was barred from the union. Most Carey loyalists and sympathetic outsiders believe he was not personally corrupt, but was ill-served by his consultants, unaware of some of their illegal activities, and had to take the fall.

Minus the illegal stuff, it would be analogous to BHO hiring Mark Penn and Harold Ickes to strategize his reelection campaign in 2012...

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 11:03 AM

2008/06/11

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The Right Reverend T

10) The major premise for tactics is the development of operations that will maintain a constant pressure upon the opposition.

Tactics spring from strategy. BHO's strategy has been to cultivate a base of supporters who are intelligent, independent thinkers who are unafraid to discuss and act independently. McCain will not have a moment's rest as JedReport and The Field and countless others constantly respond Republican falsehoods and inconsistencies – a tough summer awaits you senator.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 11:23 AM



NateG_MN

2008/06/11

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Props to AI for raising the discussion...but I think this is a classic trick question, at least the narrowing of it to the "single" best/most powerful..whatever.

The more appropriate question in my mind is "how in the world has he pulled off _ALL_OF_THE_ABOVE_" What has worked for O is that he understands and applies not only each and every one of these points listed, but a multitude of others, often at the same time. Every narrative and approach and strategy from O is multi-layered. To borrow a technological narrative, it's the _bandwidth_ of O's approach is breathtaking. That is the piece that is most underestimated in my opinion.

Sorry AI...I call's em like I see's em. All of the above.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 11:38 AM



Nicholas

2008/06/11

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I think trying to apply antiquated tactics to explain this revolutionary campaign is the same reason Hilary lost the nomination.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 11:42 AM



Susan Kitchens

2008/06/11

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Glad to see you bite into this one, AI. BTW, Doc Searls's last name has only 1 'e'.

And now I'll go to reading the discussion thread.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 11:44 AM



seabrook

2008/06/11

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1) Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have. The big rallies — especially his victory rally in Iowa and his most recent rally in Minnesota — make Obama appear to be supported by masses of

people. This is, in one sense, an appearance rooted in reality. However, Obama's opponents are also supported by masses of people. It just doesn't always seem like it when, say, McCain has a tiny event on the same night as Obama's huge Minnesota rally.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 12:03 PM



JoAnn

2008/06/11

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NateG – AI didn't say pick the best or most important point. He said to pick a point and find a specific instance of the use (or non-use) of that point. Saying that all were used is too easy. He wants us to stretch our brains by applying what we are learning in very specific ways. Sorry – just the old teacher in me coming out (LOL).

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 12:12 PM



Midaged

2008/06/11

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13) Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it and polarize it. Sounds like Rove followed these as well. In fact, if I read the list in the context of the incredibly successful Repub machine since Nixon, it seems to apply. I do not read anything in the list as capturing the essence of why someone like me (ok, I) am attracted to this movement. I realize the importance of these great thinkers to this movement and to Obama's belief in community organizing. However, I see much more positivism, inclusion, self-determination and transparency in this "movement". I suppose that for progressives who came up with 60's activism, there are tremendous similarities? I dunno. For me, upon reflection, I think that the list does not represent the movement at hand, although community organizing, grass-roots focus does.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 12:12 PM



Roman Otsima

2008/06/11

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I agree this isn't simply a technological story, even though technology has played a major enabling role. One obvious example is fund raising.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 12:15 PM



Midaged

2008/06/11

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OK, just read JoAnn's post, and maybe my tangent is OT. Picking one is hard. I still go with the ridicule one. It is the age of Daily Show and all — at some point, IMO Jon Stewart will be regarded as contributing to the change in the narrative that allowed the space for this type of campaign and busted open a voice for a totally ignored narrow group of opinion setters. That is my theory, anyway. So the ridicule one ... I'll stick with that.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 12:17 PM



JoAnn

2008/06/11

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JoAnn[Delete](#)

Midaged – Your mention of Jon Stewart reminded me that I read somewhere that younger people get more of their news from the Daily Show and the Colbert Report than from regular news. Maybe for that reason, they are more receptive to irony and ridicule. They are a large part of Obama's support. Having raised three sons, I know a lot about irony and ridicule.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 12:22 PM

NateG_MN

2008/06/11

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JoAnn;

Yea, I got that part. But I still think even that oversimplifies the answer. What has struck me since day one is that each message, each approach, each response (or non-response) has multiple layers to be explored. I find myself often playing and exercise in 'count the messages' when reviewing a speech O gives, or a position he takes on an issue. It's such a rare opportunity in the past couple of decades of rovia 'wedge issue' politics. I dunno..maybe that's a reflection of #3. Ok, I that's my answer. 😊

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 12:22 PM

Roman Otsima

2008/06/11

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Perhaps one way aspect of technology could be described as a "vehicle".

The waters or oils in paint that carry the pigments are also sometimes called the "vehicle" in the industry lexicon, if that makes any sense.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 12:24 PM

Mark in Burlington

2008/06/11

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It did not take long after Obama first arrived in Chicago for him to catapult much of the aggressive Alinsky approach. It just was not suited to his temperament and he developed his own way of organizing. This approach was modified to his campaign organization principles, which combined with the early states strategy and the candidate's message of hope and change explain his success (see <http://www.onemillionstrong.us/showDiary.do?diaryId=1160>).

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 12:29 PM

Roman Otsima

2008/06/11

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errata: *Perhaps one way [an] aspect of technology could be described, [is] as a "vehicle".*

(time for some caffeine maybe, my vehicle's motor is missing on one cylinder!)

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 12:29 PM



Jeff L.

2008/06/11

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The discipline that went into organizing Obama supporters in the [Iowa JJ rally](#) may have had elements of 2, 3 and 8. The result certainly seemed to confuse Mark Penn at the time (is that hard to do?).

But Al, you are so right. It is about organizing human beings in all kinds of situations. The technology is a powerful tool but technology used without purpose is just a bunch of bits running through wires. I answered phones at Obama HQ on Michigan Ave for a few weeks last summer. We had tons of calls from people without access to computers that wanted to do their part. I remember speaking with an impressive woman in the Carolinas that had organized young adults into teams in several neighborhoods. She did it all on her own with a telephone, her voice, paper and pencil. There have been numerous others like her. Those of us that spend large amounts of time on the internet are not aware of the bubble we live in sometimes.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 12:38 PM



Midaged

2008/06/11

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JoAnn – I really believe someone coming on the scene and actually making FUN of the administration really helped loosen the opposition. I am sure there are pages and pages of thesis (theses) on the power of humour. And Daily Show, Colbert Report — those shows are watched by media people so they influence the narrative that way too. I do think his audience is a large part of Obama's support. What is interesting (will be interesting) is to see how his audience takes to Stewart's Obama potshots. It is inevitable — that show is not really, at its core, partisan.

Mark in Burlington — thanks for pointing that out. That makes more sense to me in terms of the tactics matching the messenger.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 12:41 PM



JoAnn

2008/06/11

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NateG – That is a great way of applying #3 that I hadn't thought of. Obama's message is so far outside the corporatocracy's range of experience that they can't cope with it. That includes the DLC and the Republicans.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 12:46 PM



marqpdX

2008/06/11

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I'll take on #2. Stay with your people / what you know etc...

Obama is dominating the debate b/c he clearly represents his people, people of the community, people who have huge daily struggles for survival and dignity, people who are largely shut-out of the upper classes

of power. He meets the needs of these folks (most of us) b/c he promises us a voice and power where we have none.

Before Barack, no one on the Left could imagine a way into the circles of power that wasn't corrupt and venal. Obama has found a way.

He has found a way in two key ways:

1. he is staying true to his community
2. he is representing a diverse America in an honest way, in such a clear and powerful way that it promises a generational leap in the story that is the United States. That's incredibly exciting.

In a nutshell, that's why he's the tip of this amazing phenomenon.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 12:51 PM



Grandma4Obama

2008/06/11

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#13

Being on the ground in PA it was obvious to me that Clinton used the bitter comment and applied #13 successfully.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 1:17 PM



Phoenix Woman

2008/06/11

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Let's look at these, one at a time:

- 1) Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have.

This rule addresses the idea that the enemy can often be convinced that you're stronger than you are. This hasn't exactly been the case with Obama — most of the time, his strength and skills have grossly *underestimated* — but Hillary supporters might see the media as having been somehow conned into thinking he was stronger than he appeared.

- 2) Never go outside the experience of your people. It may result in confusion, fear and retreat.

- 3) Wherever possible go outside the experience of the enemy. Here you want to cause confusion, fear and retreat.

These two rules were arguably the most important in Alinsky's bag of tricks. Just as good generals know what their troops can and cannot do, a good organizer knows his/her troops' limitations and while he/she may carefully expand their horizons, he/she is VERY careful not to demand too much too soon of the people who make up the mass of his/her supporters. At the same time, sowing fear, uncertainty and doubt amongst the other side is a good thing.

Obama has done this excellently well. He has a large and growing following, but also a growing core of disciplined, trained people to direct them.

He started recruiting and drilling the majority of his field staff early last year, and now they know what he and his fellow Alinskyites know about

organizing. Also, his enemies mostly came of age in the "battleground states" era, where TV ads and expensive consultants had preeminence over shoe leather. This is one reason why they blew off his decades as an organizer: They'd already determined for themselves that grass-roots organizing didn't work as well as TV ads and expensive consultants. They figured that he was just another internet geek with no actual machine behind him, not realizing that he'd spent 2006 and 2007 growing his machine from the bottom up. (Obama also has been working with Howard Dean and Jim Dean and the local party orgs they've built from the bottom up. This is why they work so well together.)

- 4) Make the enemy live up to his/her own book of rules.
- 5) Ridicule is man's most potent weapon.

Obama has had to soft-pedal these against Clinton, but now that he's facing McCain he can really go to town on McCain's Bush-like addiction to saying whatever he thinks will get him through the day, true or not. The big problem, of course, is that the press loves McCain and has been gentle with him, and so doesn't give McCain's FEC violations the same attention as nonsense about flag pins. That's where his army of supporters, directed by his anti-smear task force, comes into play.

- 6) A good tactic is one that your people enjoy.
- 7) A tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag.
- 8) Keep the pressure on, with different tactics and actions and utilize all events of the period for your purpose.

Taken together, these are injunctions to stay flexible and aware, not just of your people's limitations but of the blinders you yourself may be wearing. Avoid the temptation to use the same tactics in the same permutations over and over again: Overusing these tactics gives the enemy the chance to learn to defeat them, whereas switching from tactic to tactic keeps things fresh and fun for your people and frustrates the other side's attempts to counter your actions.

Ever attend an Obama rally? Those long lines sound like they'd really be a bummer to stand in, right? And that's just to get in — there's usually another long wait before he hits the stage. Yet Obama volunteers are outside with drinks and cookies and buttons and all sorts of neat stuff, keeping the crowd occupied and the energy level up. And once you're inside, they make sure there are speakers and entertainment nearly as good as the main event.

But: Obama knows better than to try this more than once or twice in the same venue or area during the campaign. No overusing the rally concept by holding it more than once in the same place. Keep it a special event.

Also, flexibility means pivoting. And pivoting means being able to use anything — even a perceived negative — to your advantage. Which ties in with the next set of rules:

- 9) The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself.
- 10) The major premise for tactics is the development of

operations that will maintain a constant pressure upon the opposition.

11) If you push a negative hard and deep enough it will break through into its counterside.

Rule #9 works in a number of ways. It's a caution to organizers not to rely too heavily on threats, just as they aren't to rely too heavily on any particular tactic. (In other words, **don't confuse tactics with strategy**. If Obama does one thing better than anything else, it's this.) It's also a reminder that what the other side threatens is often not as bad as advertised.

Obama doesn't generally deal in blatant hardball threats, so the first part of Rule #9 isn't a big deal for him. Where he shines is in the second part of this rule: the taking of an opponent's threat and meeting it head-on, applying political aikido techniques to flip it around into a positive. His "A More Perfect Union" speech is a prime example of this. It's also a perfect example of Rule #11.

12) The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative.

Many a win has been squandered by "What do we do now?" Syndrome. The key is to be ready for all contingencies — and to be ready to change the plan as needed. Love the plan, but don't think it's carved in stone.

13) Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it and polarize it.

This is what's known nowadays as "demonization", but it's more than that. It recognizes that concrete symbols (the flag, George W. Bush) carry more emotional resonance with most people than group entities or abstract concepts (the Constitution, neocons). This was a favorite tactic of Alinsky's; whenever possible, he never blamed something on some nebulous group or abstraction, but on an actual physical person. Furthermore, it was never "this person has some good points but his/her bad points outweigh them", but "this person is evil incarnate". Obama does not do this, which is fitting considering he's running for office and not being a rabble-rouser.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 1:17 PM



Phoenix Woman

2008/06/11

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About Clinton and Alinsky:

She missed out on Rules for Radicals, as her thesis, done after she stopped hanging out with the Alinsky crowd, was done in 1969 and Rules didn't come out until just before Alinsky's death in 1972. She understands some of it, mostly things like Rule #13, but not the organizing parts such as Rules #2 and #3.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 1:25 PM

**Alexa**

2008/06/11

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Interesting post and mental exercise. I can't respond. This post will take a week's worth of thinking.

But one immediate reaction was that Obama understands the Power of One. He did it in his own circumstances. He then watched it come to fruition among people others would ordinarily dismiss as not politically savvy, or highly educated, enough on the south side of Chicago. He seems to have not underestimated the innate power of a people to change where they are.

[That, BTW, is the cardinal rule of public relations. Called a 'roll out'. Always, *always*, start in your own community and start small, and blanket the lowest level of power first.]

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 1:26 PM

**We won't get fooled again**

2008/06/11

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I've been pondering. Many here have used excellent examples as to how the rules were used. So I'm not going to try and apply them in the way AI requested.

In my opinion, it's not about that. It's about The fierce urgency of now. That term, It resonated.

Technology is a tool that has been used to help achieve the goal, but it isn't the end all be all.

People are.

Obama has his finger on the pulse of what is needed now. The tools at his disposal are new, the numbers of organized supporters unprecedented.

The catalyst, a very old story.

When people hurt, when people are in need, when it affects you and yours, you become motivated to make it better.

This has happened before. A very long time ago when Farmers with muskets said, "Enough".

They organized and fought a country with nothing but a ragtag army, to make better lives for their families and for their countrymen. When really smart people sat down and wrote the Declaration of Independence.

Perhaps that seems overly dramatic or totally off the mark, but really I think this is our chance at a second revolution.

The large number of young people involved underscores that feeling to me. They have had enough of "what it is" they want "what it could be"

They want to take back our inalienable rights of Life Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness and they want to make sure this time it applies to all.

In my humble opinion that is what is happening here.

We have an unlikely candidate. A man whose name and background is very different from anything we have had before, It is that difference that started the revolutionist ball rolling.

Not an intellectualist view, I know, but still that is how I see it.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 2:10 PM

**Hudson**

2008/06/11

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While I have the utmost respect for Alinsky (both his theory and his practice), I've always disagreed with one of the thirteen points from Rules for Radicals listed above:

2) Never go outside the experience of your people. It may result in confusion, fear and retreat.

Perhaps I've misconstrued his point, but in activism I've found that while much of a group's activity stays within "the experience of your people," it is often necessary and even quite useful to push people to extend themselves into activities and arenas which challenge them to do more, and do better.

I'm wondering what others' understanding of #2 is...

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 2:47 PM

**Hudson**

2008/06/11

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P.S. I would also note that in most respects, Alinsky's guidelines are intended for groups and causes which involve opposing and resolving a specific or endemic injustice.

To that extent, the rules may apply only partially to Obama's campaign, because they largely deal with the oppositional goals of a movement: How to slay the enemy causing the injustice, and to secure restitution or a better situation for those aggrieved.

Considering the grievous harm done by the Bush administration to our country's treasury, its laws, its protections, and its lives, Obama's campaign could be considered such a campaign, with Bush as Alinsky's hypothetical enemy. Advice such as #10 apply to Obama's 50-state strategy:

<blockquote>The major premise for tactics is the development of operations that will maintain a constant pressure upon the opposition.</blockquote>

But Obama's campaign is about much more than just preventing McSame from extending the Bush era and its injustices. It is also about a giant cultural shift in our politics in a more positive direction. To a great extent, then, the rules don't offer much instruction about the forward-looking aspects of the campaign or what happens once Obama is elected.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 2:57 PM

**Roman Otsima**

2008/06/11

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Lee aka, that's a 5 star post! That describes really well how things are resonating with me, as well.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 4:47 PM

**michael**

2008/06/11

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Hudson, from my reading of *Dreams from my Father*, your take on #2

mirrors Obama's just about exactly.

Your second post raises another point: Alinsky & Co's work was, I think quite deliberately, *not* about electoral politics. There would have to be some adjustments — and frankly some incorporation of good old-fashioned

Selling of the President product-packaging stuff. I think Obama's quite consciously trying to do both — and he hopes that the organizing part will outlive the campaign as some kind of independent entity. It'll be interesting to see how an Obama administration deals with the inevitable conflict with the monster he's trying to create.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 4:55 PM



Tom W.

2008/06/11

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Well, I don't want to rain on the parade, but I have to disagree with the premise – Barack Obama as revolutionary. I don't see it. I like the guy, admire his talent, and believe he'll romp over McCain. I also think there are a lot of good points made here – some really thoughtful comments. I've enjoyed this thread very much, I have to say.

But I can't find my way to the core – Obama's breaking down the structural status quo in politics. I see it more as limited tactical change for the better in the service of a modest (but left of center, and thank God) policy initiative. I see Senator O. as a very talented conventional politician, playing the game from inside while running a brilliant marketing/branding/communications program with elements of outsider politics. Maybe I'm not enlightened yet.

From [The Narrative Is Not a Story of Technology](#), 2008/06/11 at 6:09 PM

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